



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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SPOTLIGHT

A RESOURCE TOOL FOR THE PREVENTION OF
UNDERAGE DRINKING

What if it's not your kid?

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DID YOU KNOW?



Since the Mini-
mum Legal Age
Drinking was
passed in 1984,
25,000 lives have
been saved.

All of us recognize the role of parents as key players in our efforts to reduce and prevent underage drinking. Unfortunately, the parent is not always on task in this matter.

Most of us are leaders in our communities in some respect, maybe through the church, school, or neighborhood associations. The point is that, as adults, we are oftentimes engaged in the lives of our local youth, even if they can't be considered 'family'. Our role here should not be underestimated. In some cases, you may be the only adult that this young person can talk to.

What do you do when

you don't have direct authority over a kid who has just told you that she goes out every weekend and drinks until she passes out?

The first thing to do, as obvious as it sounds, is to talk to the teen. Listen, especially without judgment, to what he/she is telling you. Be clear about what your expectations are and the consequences of underage drinking. Above all, ensure that the teen knows that you are there for him/her.

What about the parents or caregivers? Should they be told?

This will undoubtedly be a tough conversation, but the entire family is affected by one member's substance abuse.

Express your concerns. Be prepared to offer information about underage drinking, as well as to provide helpful resources within the community. It's important to be aware that, though this isn't always the case, some parents are enabling their teenager to drink.

A final point is this: follow up. Don't just have one conversation with the teen or even with the family. Stay involved, as you are an important piece in the issue.

Caffeinated Alcohol Beverages: Victory!

Kudos go out to MillerCoors! The company has been the producer of the country's leading alcopop beverages (i.e. Sparks). Due to a lawsuit stemming from 13 states, MillerCoors has agreed to stop making and selling caffeinated alcohol beverages. They have also agreed to cease marketing tactics that are misleading and/or targeted to youth.

In the December issue of *Spotlight*, we included a piece about the popularity of these alcopops and the dangers associated with them.

It is a remarkable public health victory for such a large alcohol beverage company to recognize the consequences associated with underage drinking, as well as to acknowledge the ways in which alcopops contribute to these costs.

Congratulations to those who repeatedly advocated against these beverages and succeeded in doing so. May they be an inspiration to us all!

Excessive Alcohol Use is the Norm

Not only are American youth starting to drink at an earlier age, but the quantity and frequency of this behavior have increased as well. It's no surprise that by their senior year of high school, many adolescents have consumed alcohol at least once in their lifetime. What is startling, however, is the rate of binge drinking among underage drinkers. A recent report, based on the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, discovered that 91% (no, not a typo) of all alcoholic beverages consumed by teenagers are consumed by those who drink heavily. As youth get older, they drink more and parallel to this trend is that they also drink more heavily, far surpassing the consumption patterns of adults.

The brighter side to all of this is that the trends related to binge drinking have been fairly stable over the past years. Additionally, there are many minors who engage in little or no consumption of alcohol. Even though more drink as they progress through the high school years, by senior year, there are still about 38% who do not drink.

What's Happening in Mississippi?

DON'T FORGET!

The Mississippi School will be January 20-23 in Hattiesburg! Please visit www.themsschool.ms for more information. The seminars and speakers are quite impressive. Don't miss out on this outstanding opportunity! The deadline to register is this Friday, January 9th.

